

# MRSA: What You Need to Know

## What is it?

MRSA stands for **Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus**, which is caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* ("staph" infection). MRSA is a type of "staph" infection that is resistant to common antibiotics.

## Symptoms

Staph infections, including MRSA, generally start as a **skin irritation** that resembles a pimple, spider bite, or boil. They can quickly become more inflamed, and, if left untreated, can spread to more areas of the body.

## Details

Normally, a variety of staph bacteria is present on the skin or in the nose of about every 3 in 10 people at any given time. These people are considered "colonized" but not infected. Staph bacteria is **generally harmless** unless it enters the body through a cut or sore, even then it usually causes only a minor infection in healthy people.

Although 30% of people are colonized with staph, even a smaller percentage of those people are colonized with MRSA. Healthy people can be colonized with MRSA and have no illness, but they can **pass the germs on to others**.

## Possible Cause

In general, humans are to blame for most of the cause for antibiotic resistant germs. **Unnecessary overuse of antibiotics**, in both humans and animals, cause the germs to become resistant.

## Prevention

- Wash your hands using proper technique (Scrub for at least 15 seconds).
- Do not share personal items (razors, tooth brushes, towels, athletic equipment, etc.)
- Keep wounds covered.
- If you have a wound or sore, wash your linens in hot water.
- If you have a skin infection, ask your doctor if you should be tested for MRSA.
- Use antibiotics appropriately. Take all of the prescribed medicine even if you are feeling better. Do not share antibiotics or save them for another time.

## Treatment

*Vancomycin* is often used to treat antibiotic resistant drugs. While this drug cures most cases, health professionals predict that germs will **eventually become resistant** to this antibiotic as well.